Lincoln took the unusual course of consulting with several of the more prominent generals in the army, and especially with Generals McDowell and Franklin. The former of these officers has preserved a record of these consultations.[1] They were not specially noteworthy in a military point of view, for neither of the officers had expected to be called upon to frame a plan for the movement of the army, nor did either of them possess the requisite information in regard to its strength, the condition of the various bodies of which it was composed, or the numerous other points, an intimate acquaintance with which was necessary in order to frame a comprehensive scheme for the employment of so large a force. But the record of General McDowell is interesting as showing the very despondent state of President Lincoln's mind at this time,—the middle of January, 1862. "To use Ms own expression," writes McDowell, "'If something was not soon done, the bottom, would be out of the whole affair.'" Yet the army near "Washington was large and constantly increasing ; it was admirably organized ; it was in excellent spirits and fine condition. It could not march, it is true, for the Virginia roads were for the moment practically impassable; but in a few weeks the

mud would dry up, and a spring campaign would be possible. In the meantime, the troops were well housed and well fed ; they were daily improving in drill; and they were learning by protracted habits of soldierly life to become soldiers in fact as well as in name. It was much the same with the Western

[1] Swinton, 79 *et seq.*